

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3476

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 4102

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: COSTA GOMES AND CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS

REFS: LISBON 4071, STATE 170880, STATE 170871

1. AT MY INSTRUCTIONS DATT SAW MAJOR ANTONIO CALDAS, SENIOR MILITARY AIDE TO COSTA GOMES TODAY (JULY 21). TOLD HIM HE SHOULD PASS ON TO COSTA GOMES FROM ME (A) THAT CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF POLITICAL SITUATION IN FAVOR OF RADICAL ELEMENTS WILL MAKE IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT FOR U.S. TO GET SUPPORT FROM AMERICAN PUBLIC AND CONGRESS FOR FURTHER ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE; (B) USG IS CONVINCED THAT NOW IS THE APPROPRIATE MOMENT TO ACT; (C) IF MODERATES DO ACT NOW THERE COULD WELL BE WAYS, SUCH AS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, IN WHICH USG COULD BE HELPFUL; AND (D) AN APPROACH HAS BEEN MADE TO THE SOVIETS EXPRESSING OUR CONCERN OVER THEIR ACTIVITIES RE PORTUGAL.

2. WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAILS CALDAS INDICATED THERE WERE NO MAJOR DECISIONS IN THE JULY 19 MEETING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. HE SAID COSTA GOMES WAS UPSET OVER WEEKEND DEVELOPMENTS, WHICH WE TOOK TO MEAN CONTINUING PCP OFFENSIVE. AT SAME TIME CALDAS IMPLIED COSTA GOMES WAS HAVING TROUBLE MAKING UP HIS MIND. FAMILY INFLUENCE WAS A FACTOR, SINCE COSTA GOMES' SON IS DATING VASCO GONCALVES' DAUGHTER, AND BOTH ARE ACTIVE COMMUNISTS.

3. CALDAS ALSO INDICATED THAT PERSONAL SECURITY WAS A CONSIDERABLE

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TION. ONE MEMBER OF COSTA GOMES' MILITARY HOUSEHOLD, MAJOR

CARLOS GOMES, IS A KNOWN COMMUNIST. LTC MONTEIRO, CHIEF OF SECURITY FOR THE PRESIDENCY, HAD ASKED TO RESIGN BECAUSE HE WAS UNDER PRESSURE FROM LEFT TO COOPERATE "IF IT IS NECESSARY TO CAPTURE AND HOLD COSTA GOMES."

4. COMMENT: CALDAS APPEARED MORE SUBDUED AND LESS CONFIDENT OF COSTA GOMES ON THIS VISIT THAN ON FRIDAY (REFTEL LISBON 4071). HE DID INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO OUST VASCO GONCALVES MAY BE MADE IN RC MEETING TODAY JULY 21. IN ANY EVENT ANTI-GONCALVES ELEMENTS STILL ANTICIPATED AN OPENING LATER ON IF, AS THEY EXPECT, GONCALVES IS UNABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT.

5. IN THIS PROCESS, THE BIGGEST ENIGMA CONTINUES TO BE COSTA GOMES. HE COULD BE SLIDING BACK TOWARD THE TYPICAL PORTUGUESE SOLUTION; DO NOTHING AND HOPE THE PROBLEM WILL EVENTUALLY SOLVE ITSELF. WE ARE TRYING TO PERSUADE HIM THAT THIS TIME THIS ISN'T A REAL OPTION; THAT A NON-DECISION IS A DECISION OF FAR REACHING IMPORTANCE FOR HIM AND HIS COUNTRY.

6. HAVE ASKED FOR MEETING WITH MELO ANTUNES TO DELIVER SAME MESSAGE. THERE IS NO DOUBT WHERE HIS SENTIMENTS LIE; IN FACT IT WILL BE A SURPRISE TO ME IF HE IS INCLUDED IN VASCO GONCALVES' NEW ATTEMPTS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT.
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